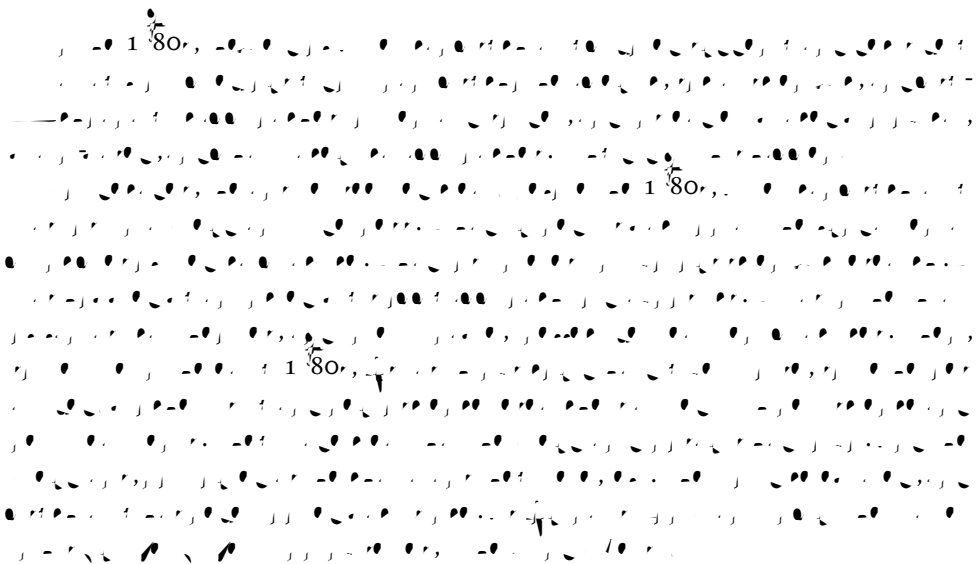


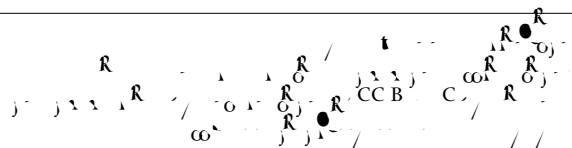
Mental Health's Stalled (Biological) Revolution: Its Origins, Aftermath & Future Opportunities

Anne Harrington

The 1980s, by common consensus, saw a big and remarkably rapid pivot away from previously dominant psychoanalytic and social science perspectives in American psychiatry and toward a so-called medical model foregrounding biology and the brain. The standard understanding is that this happened because, after years of wandering lost in a Freudian desert, the field had finally gained some fundamental new biological understandings of mental illness. The standard understanding is wrong. Nothing of sudden significance had happened on the biological front. There had been no major scientific or therapeutic breakthroughs. Why, then, did the field really pivot? This essay aims to explain. The answer is important, not least because choices made back then have directly shaped the fraught world of psychiatry with which we live today.



Since the days of Sigmund Freud, the practice of psychiatry has been more art than science. Surrounded by an aura of witchcraft, proceeding on impression and hunch,



often ineffective, it was the bumbling and sometimes humorous stepchild of modern science. But for a decade and more, research psychiatrists have been working quietly in laboratories, dissecting the brains of mice and men and teasing out the chemical formulas that unlock the secrets of the mind. Now, in the 1980s, their work is paying off.¹

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Encyclopedia of Schizophrenia and other Psychotic Disorders* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 123.

It took major advances in medical technology, specifically the computer revolution and the rise of new techniques in neuroimaging, genetics research and psychopharmacology to swing the pendulum back to Kraepelin's search for the biological causes of psychotic disorders. Historians of science now regard psychoanalysis as a pseudo-science that inexplicably dominated a subfield of medicine— psychiatry.²

2. Sigmund Freud, *The Encyclopedia of Schizophrenia and other Psychotic Disorders* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 123.

... ..

The scientific progress in our field was stunning, but while we studied the risk factors for suicide, the death rate had climbed 33 percent. While we identified the neuroanatomy of addiction, overdose deaths had increased by threefold. While we mapped the genes for schizophrenia, people with this disease were still chronically unemployed and dying 20 years early.⁴

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Never have we had a more pressing need for experts in human engineering. The greatest prerequisite for peace, which is uppermost in the minds and hearts of all of us, must be sanity—sanity in its broadest sense, which permits clear thinking on the part of all citizens. We must continue to look to the experts in the field of psychiatry and other mental sciences for guidance in the evaluation of our mental health resources.¹¹

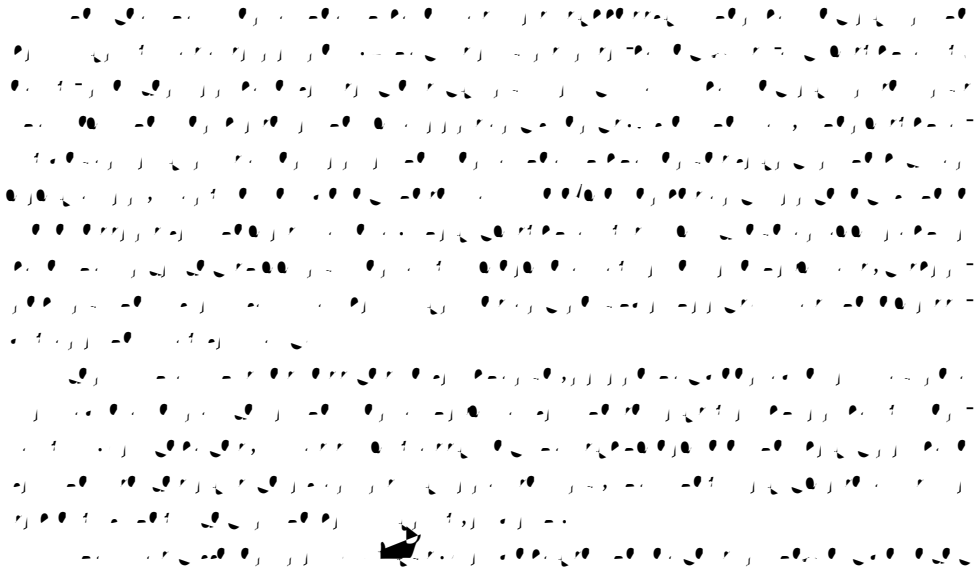
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Handwritten musical notation on a grand staff, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as '150', '21', and '2'. The notation is dense and covers approximately 15 lines.

Thousands spend their days—often for weeks at a stretch—locked in devices euphemistically called “restraints”: thick leather handcuffs, great canvas camisoles, “muffs,” “mitts,” wristlets, locks and straps, and restraining sheets. Hundreds are confined in “lodges”—bare, bedless rooms reeking with filth and feces—by day lit only through half-inch holes in steel-plated windows, by night merely black tombs in which the cries of the insane echo unheard from the peeling plaster of the walls.²⁴



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Of course ! *Of course*
! *Of course* !
! *Of course* !

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Surviving Schizophrenia.
Surviving Schizophrenia
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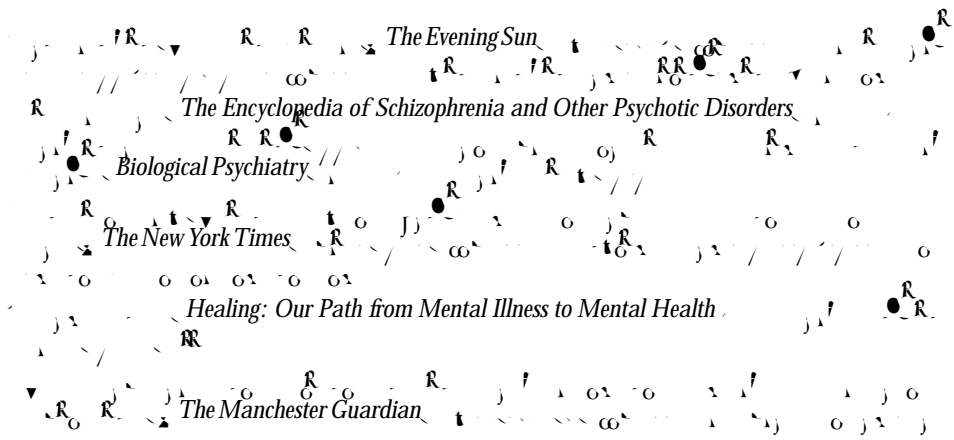
I am disappointed that we have never identified the “bipolar gene.” ... I realize now how complicated it is and how naïve we were. Very good people are now looking for the genes, not a single gene. I am not going to be the one to find them, but it would be nice to know that there really are genes when patients ask, “Is this a genetic disorder?” and I can only say, “Well, we think so.”⁴⁵

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Mental Hygiene and Social Work
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Schizophrenia: Science

